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ABSTRACT

Information gained from program evaluation for Reading Recovery (RR) in Maine is used to continually improve implementation of the program, as well as to generate additional evaluation questions. This report summarizes statewide findings about the program based on data from the 1995-96 school year. The report is organized topically into brief sections, each one reporting on a different aspect of the program. The information presented in the report includes a brief history of the Reading Recovery program in Maine; school-level implementation of the program; demographic information about the children served; the amount of time children spent in the RR program; program outcomes; literacy achievement over the first-grade year; information about classroom teachers' professional development in early literacy; and community attitudes about the program. At the end of the report, the Statewide Program Coordinator and Trainer of Teacher Leaders gives her recommendations, based on the findings presented, for the future success of the program. Sections of the report are: Foreword; Executive Summary; Reading Recovery in Maine, 1995-96; About the Data; Implementation; Children Served; Program Outcomes; Time in the Program; Criterion-Referenced Measures of Achievement; Norm Referenced Measures of Achievement; Classroom Teachers' Professional Development; Attitudes about the Program; Conclusions; and Recommendations. (Contains 11 tables and 13 figures of data.) (NKA)

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Report and Evaluation

1995-1996

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Report and Evaluation
1995-1996

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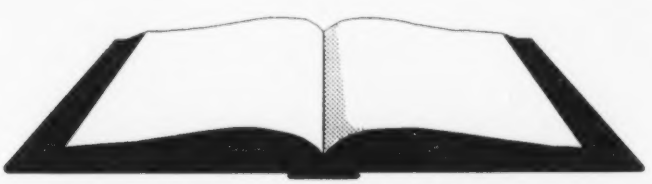

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Forward

Program evaluation for Reading Recovery (RR) in Maine is on-going and dynamic. Information gained from evaluation is used to continually improve implementation of the program, as well as to generate additional evaluation questions. This report summarizes statewide findings about the program based on data from the 1995-96 school year.

This document is organized topically into brief sections, each one reporting on a different aspect of the program. The information presented includes a brief history of the RR program in Maine, school-level implementation of the program, demographic information about the children served, the amount of time children spent in the program, program outcomes, literacy achievement over the first grade year, information about classroom teachers' professional development in early literacy, and community attitudes about the program. At the end of the report, the Statewide Program Coordinator and Trainer of Teacher Leaders gives her recommendations, based on the findings presented, for the future success of the program.

Executive Summary

- **The RR program continued to grow in Maine in 1995-96.** Over 300 more children were served in 1995-96 than in 1994-95. This year, 1709 children were served by the program in over 200 elementary schools in Maine.

- **About 50% of eligible children statewide were served.** Not all schools in Maine have adopted the program. A number of schools (37%) have adopted the program, but are not considered fully implemented. The RR program recommends one RR teacher for no more than every 40 first grade children.

- **Statewide, 54% of children who participated in RR (even if they only received a single lesson) successfully discontinued. Almost three quarters (73%) of children who received a full RR program discontinued.** There are a variety of reasons some children who receive the full program do not discontinue. These include a child's family moving, the school not having an appropriate alternative placement, and the child having an in-training RR teacher.

- **The average number of RR lessons for discontinued children was 66.7, and the average number of weeks of lessons in the program for discontinued children was 17.7.** Most (61%) children discontinued after the first of April.

- **Discontinued RR children make large gains in reading and writing skills over the year.** Their learning gains are larger than those of not-at-risk random sample students.

- **Nearly all (between 92% and 98%) discontinued RR children met or exceeded statewide average bands on measures of literacy skill by the end of the school year.** This is notable for two reasons. First, these children were all identified as at risk for literacy failure at the beginning of the year. Second, no other group of children (random sample, waiting list, or not discontinued) demonstrated such consistency of skill levels at year-end testing.

- **Reactions to the RR program were very positive from parents, teachers, and administrators.** Parents especially lauded the program and its accomplishments with their children. Concerns primarily focused on funding issues and how more children could be served.

- **The Trainer of Teacher Leaders in Maine offers her suggestions for continued improvement of the program.** First, she suggests continued efforts aimed at referring fewer RR children for long-term reading and writing help. The Trainer's second suggestion is to carry over into second grade RR children who did not receive a full program during their first grade year.

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Reading Recovery in Maine, 1995-96

Reading Recovery (RR) is an early intervention program for first graders at risk for literacy failure. The program targets the bottom 20% of children in each first grade classroom. It involves an intensive one-on-one session between the at-risk child and the RR teacher for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. The extra instruction is short-term; students are released from the program as soon as they have achieved or surpassed the average literacy level of the other first graders in the class. The philosophy behind RR is that by solving reading difficulties early on, students who would have floundered in school due to literacy difficulties will be able to succeed, since nearly all school subjects require a foundation of reading and writing. RR teachers study literacy learning intensely for a year as part of their specialized training.

Marie M. Clay conducted observational research in the mid 1960s that enabled her to design techniques for detecting children's early reading and writing difficulties. In the mid 1970s, she developed RR procedures with teachers and tested the program in New Zealand. The success of this pilot program led to the nationwide adoption of RR in New Zealand in the early 1980s. In 1984, the success of the program in New Zealand led researchers at the Ohio State University to introduce RR to the United States.

In February of 1990, Kathryn Manning of the Maine State Department of Education organized a group of 26 Maine educators to go to Ohio to see RR teacher training in action and attend the conference. In 1990-91 and 1991-92, three professionals trained around the country to be Teacher Leaders in Maine. In 1991, Paula Moore was sent by the University of Maine to New Zealand to train as a university Trainer of Teacher Leaders. Additional Teacher Leaders have been trained in Maine by Moore. Those Teacher Leaders, in turn, train RR teachers who work in schools across the state.

Progressive statewide program evaluation of the program was begun in the fall of 1995 by the Maine Department of Education. The program evaluation for RR in Maine is progressive for two reasons. First, the responsibilities for evaluation are assumed by a full-time researcher. This allows thorough, objective evaluations to be conducted of the program. The second reason is that evaluations are dynamic. The researcher in charge of program evaluation is in frequent contact with RR professionals. Information gathered from investigations can be utilized quickly to improve the program. Similarly, questions about program outcomes and processes can be framed as research questions and addressed. The full-time program evaluator works out of the University of Maine College of Education.

About the Data

Data are collected on three groups of children. **Reading Recovery children** are children who have had at least one RR lesson. Some children who are identified as needing RR services do not start RR immediately, due to insufficient resources (i.e., limited RR teacher time). The children with the greatest needs are always started first. (These children are called **first round RR children**.) Others in need of RR are placed on a waiting list. As each child is either discontinued or referred to another program for long term help, a space is available for a child from the waiting list. Children who start the program after another child has exited are called **second round RR children**. If a child is on the waiting list all year, and is never given a RR lesson, he or she is considered a **waiting list child**. Waiting list children provide a good comparison group by which to chart RR children's progress.

Random sample children are sampled from the population of children in each first grade class for whom RR was not indicated. Essentially, these children represent the top 80% of each first grade class. The goal of RR is to accelerate the bottom 20% of students so that their literacy skills are at the average level of students from this top 80%. Consequently, random sample children are also a valuable comparison group for RR children.

Six measures are used to assess literacy skills for the three groups of first grade children (random sample, waiting list, and Reading Recovery). **Text reading level** represents the highest book in a series, ranked for difficulty, that the child could read with 90% accuracy. Levels range from 0[1] to 30 (about a sixth-grade reading level). The **Ohio word test** asks children to read a list of 20 high-frequency words. The child's score indicates the number of words read correctly. For the **hearing and recording sounds (HRS)** test, a sentence is read to the child, and he or she is asked to write the words. The test measures the child's ability to analyze words for sounds. Every sound represented correctly is scored as a point. On the **writing vocabulary** test, children write down all the words they know how to write in ten minutes. Each correct word, including the child's own name, is counted as a point. The **letter identification** task includes all lower and upper case letters as well as the literary g and a on a page of randomly arranged letters. Children are given credit for a correct response if they name the letter, give the letter sound, or name a word that starts with the letter. The maximum score on this assessment is 54. The **concepts about print** assessment in the Observation Survey measures a group of behaviors that reveal what children understand about the conventions of written language. The assessment comprises twenty-four items and performance is measured by number of items correct. These six measures were taken both in the spring and in the fall, so the progress of all three groups can be compared. The measures were also taken at entry into and exit from the Reading Recovery program.

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[1]The lowest level, Level A, is the inability to read "No, no, no," in the lowest level book. A child at Level B can read "No, no, no," but cannot read the next level of text, a Level 1. Both Levels A and B are represented as 0 in the RR data.

Text reading, the Ohio word test, HRS, letter identification, and the concepts about print test all have ceilings. For example, the highest score a child can get on the Ohio word test is 20. This was not a problem in the fall, when few if any children received the highest possible scores on these three measures. However, at spring testing, some children from all groups reached these ceilings. It is therefore unclear how much higher some scores would have been without these constraints. While the writing vocabulary test does not have an explicit ceiling, the highest score a child can receive is constrained by the ten minute time limit.

Implementation

Every year since its adoption in 1991-92, the RR program has grown in Maine. Over 300 more children were served in 1995-96 than in 1994-95. In 1995-96, the RR program in Maine served 1709 children. Based on the estimate that 20% of children are at risk for literacy difficulties, Maine served half (50%) of its eligible first graders in 1995-96. Figure 1 shows the numbers of children served each year since the program's initial implementation in Maine and the estimated number of at-risk children. The estimated numbers of at-risk children are based on 1995-96 enrollment data. Table 1 shows the calculation of this estimate for the 1995-96 school year.

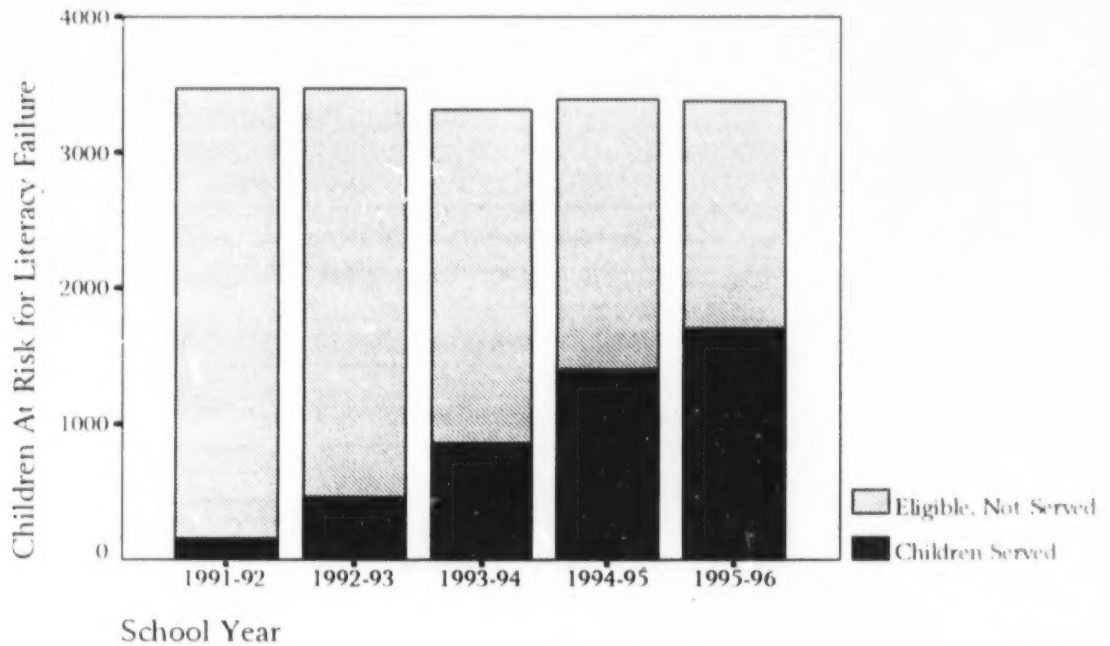

Figure 1. Children served since 1991, and the estimated number not served

Table 1.
Estimated Number of First Graders in Maine Eligible for Reading Recovery and the Number Served, 1995-96

First Graders, 1995-96 (enrolled in public school)	Estimated Number Eligible for Reading Recovery (20%)	Number Served, 1995-96
16,934	3387	1709 (50%)

Not every school with a RR teacher in Maine has fully implemented the program. Depending on the size of the school and the amount of need, some schools may need more than one RR teacher. Schools with 30-40 first graders, in general, need one RR teacher (who can serve 6 - 8 children per year, or the lowest 20%). However, larger schools or schools with more than 20% of their first graders at risk may need additional teachers. Figure 2 displays the 1995-96 levels of implementation of schools in Maine.

Note that over half (63%) of the schools in Maine that have adopted RR employ at least one RR teacher for every 40 first grade students. (The smallest slice of pie, schools with fewer than 10 first graders for one RR teacher, represents 4% of schools). Fourteen percent (14%) of schools did not provide information on their level of implementation.

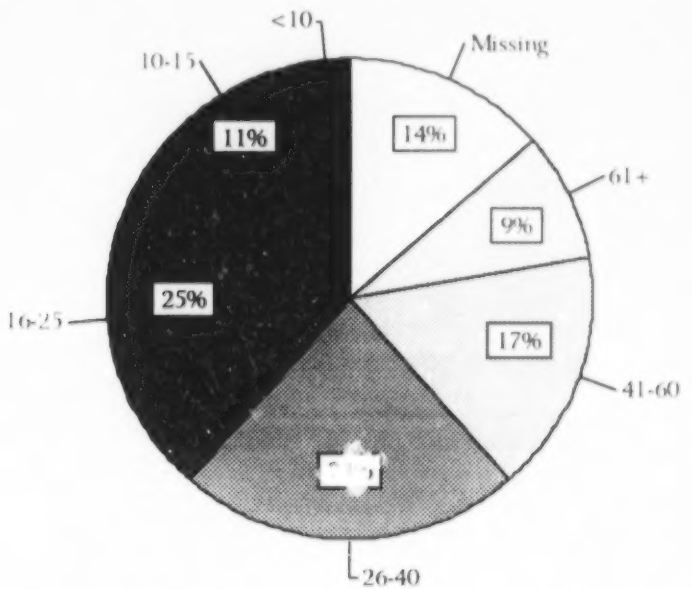

Figure 2. Children per RR teacher in schools statewide.

Children Served

Table 2 displays the gender, race, and lunch cost, one measure of socio-economic status, of children served through RR in 1995-96. On average, RR children tend to be less economically advantaged than children not eligible for the program, and there are more boys than girls in RR, compared to first graders not judged to be at risk. However, the program serves both boys and girls from all socio-economic strata.

Table 2.
Characteristics of Children in the Program, 1995-96

	First Graders	
	Reading Recovery	Others
Boys	63%	46%
Girls	37%	54%
Lunch Cost Free*	51%	32%
Lunch Cost Reduced*	8%	9%
Lunch Cost Regular*	41%	59%
Native American	2%	1%
White, Not Hispanic	96%	97%
Black, Not Hispanic	1%	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1%	1%
Hispanic	1%	<1%

*Based on children from whom information was available. 75% of RR children and 81% of others.

In the first five years of the program, RR has spread to nearly all regions of Maine. Figure 3 displays a map of Maine, with towns that offer RR to their children shaded black. Grey areas indicate unincorporated areas or areas with very low population density.

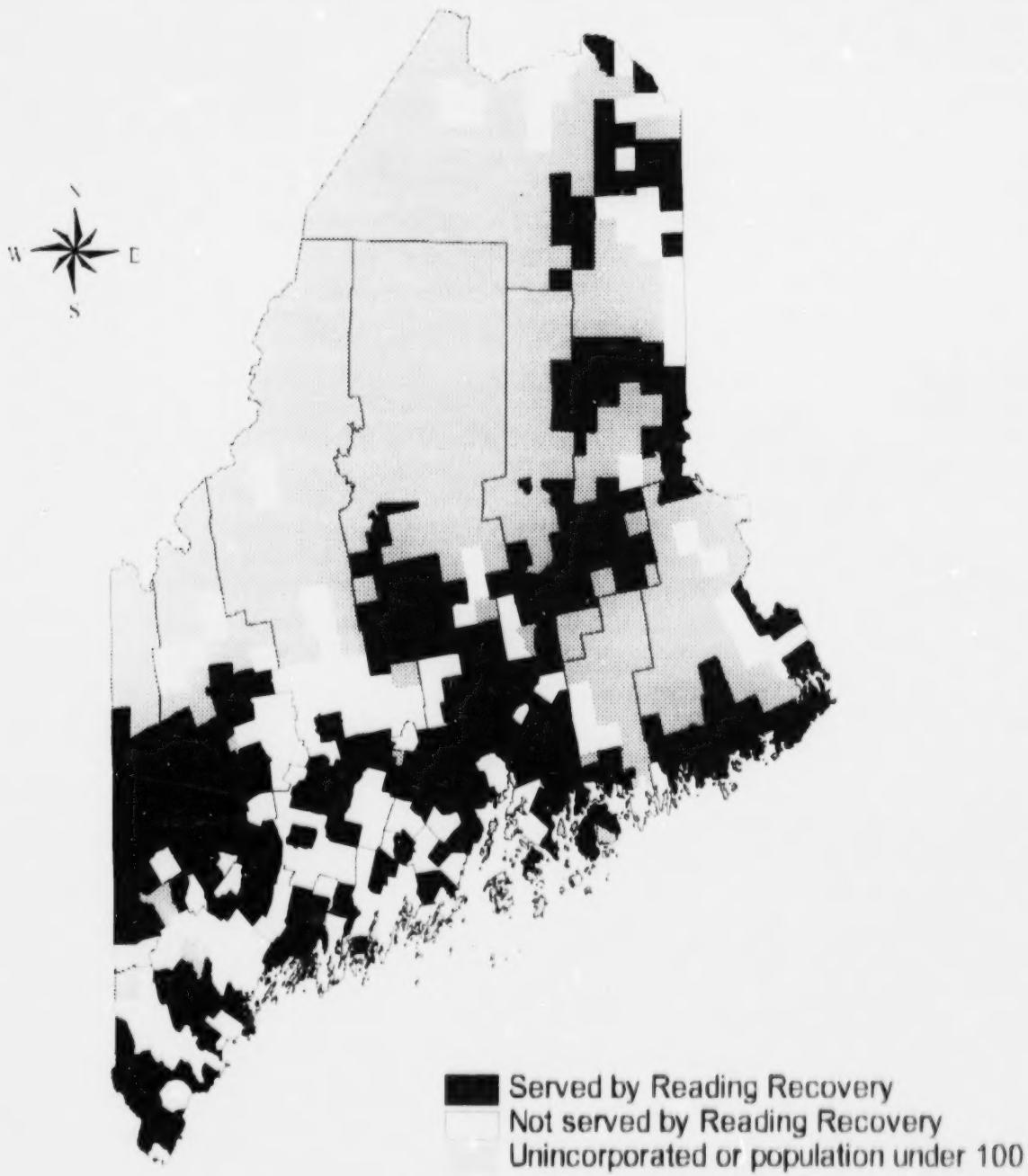

Figure 3. Reading Recovery in Maine, 1995-96

Program Outcomes

Of the 1709 children who participated in the RR program in 1995-96, 931 (54.5%) successfully discontinued from the program. Two hundred sixteen (216, 12.6% of the total) were referred for long-term specialist help. Referral happens when the school team, in consultation with the Teacher Leader, decides that the child will benefit more from a different program. Of the 216 children referred, 105 (6.1% of the total) were referred after receiving at least 60 lessons, and 111 (6.5% of the total) received fewer than 60 lessons before they were referred. The remaining 562 children (32.9% of the total) were neither discontinued from the program nor referred. Three hundred thirty-two (332, 19.4% of the total) had received fewer than 60 lessons, and 230 (13.5% of the total) had received at least 60 lessons. Reading Recovery did not continue for them because the school year ended and they could not be carried over into either the summer or the following fall. These children are considered still in the program. In an effort to improve outcomes for "still in the program" children, a handful of schools this year carried children's RR programs over into the summer or the following fall. Eleven (11) of the 931 children who discontinued did so after the 1995-96 school year ended. Figure 4 illustrates the program outcomes for all 1709 RR children.

Figure 4. End of program status for Reading Recovery children, 1995-96.

The pie chart in Figure 4 includes all children who participated in the RR program, regardless of how many lessons they received or how many weeks they were in the program. Some of these children did not receive what is considered a "full" RR program (defined nationally as 60 lessons or discontinued with fewer). Of children who received the "full" RR program, 74% were successfully discontinued. Table 3 gives these numbers.

Table 3.
Discontinuation Rate for "Program Children"

Number of "Program Children"	Number Discontinued	% Discontinued
1266	931	74%

Many things can affect the percentage of children who discontinue from RR. One small but measurable influence on a school's discontinuation rate is its level of implementation. The discontinuation rates in Table 4 represent the percentage of all RR children (even those who only received one lesson) who discontinued. Table 4 relates level of implementation to discontinuation rate for Maine schools. Note that schools with fewer than 15 first graders per RR Teacher in 1995-96 tended to discontinue a larger percentage of their RR children. As the number of children increases, discontinuation rates tend to drop, although the relationship is statistically weak (r = .17). The discontinuation rates in Table 4 do not take into consideration waiting list children who were never started into the RR program.

Table 4.
Levels of Implementation and Discontinuation Rates, 1995-96

Number of First Grade Children per RR Teacher	Number (and Percent) of Schools in Each Category			
	0% - 25% discontinued	26% - 50% discontinued	51% - 75% discontinued	Over 75% discontinued
fewer than 10	0	0	4 (57%)	3 (43%)
10 - 15	2 (10%)	6 (29%)	8 (38%)	5 (24%)
16 - 25	8 (17%)	19 (40%)	14 (30%)	6 (13%)
26 - 40	9 (20%)	14 (31%)	18 (40%)	4 (9%)
41 - 60	4 (12%)	14 (42%)	10 (30%)	5 (15%)
over 60	4 (25%)	4 (25%)	7 (44%)	1 (6%)

Individual reasons children do not discontinue can be diverse. Five hundred sixty-two children neither discontinued nor were referred. Of these children, 332 did not receive at least sixty lessons (the full program). Of the 230 children who did receive at least 60 lessons, 10 could not complete the program because they moved. Twenty-eight (28) were kept in the program despite slow gains because there was no appropriate alternative placement for them. Eleven (11) were kept in the program despite slow gains because their schools had enough resources to serve all the at-risk children, and gains were not an issue. Ninety-seven (97) children were served by a teacher in-training, and the fact that they did not discontinue by the end of the year was attributed to this.

For the remaining 84 children, it is unclear what factors prevented them from accelerating and reaching success through RR. Examination of their fall concepts about print and fall letter identification tests, two measures of skills necessary for literacy success in first grade, did not reveal consistencies. Just like children who meet with success through RR, some of these children started out with very low scores in the fall, and others started out with scores indicative of higher skill levels. It should be noted that these 84 children represent 5% of the children in the RR program, less than ½% of first graders in Maine. See Table 5.

Table 5.
Reasons RR Children Were "Still in the Program"

Reason*	Number of Children	Percentage
Incomplete Program**	332 (49 of these children moved)	59%
Moved	10	2%
No appropriate alternative placement	28	5%
Abundant resources'	11	2%
Teacher in training''	97	17%
Reason not apparent	75	13%
Missing	9	2%
Total	562	100%

*Reasons were attributed in the order that they are presented here. That is, all children who received an incomplete program are counted in that category, even if they might also qualify for a later category. Children who moved and had an in-training teacher, for example, are counted as children who moved.

**An incomplete program was defined (consistent with national standards) as fewer than 60 lessons for purposes of this table. The other reasons in the table are RR teacher attributions, or the reasons RR teachers gave when asked why a child was still in the program at the end of the year.

'A school is considered to have abundant resources when the amount of RR teaching resource is greater than the student need. For example, a small school with only ten first graders and one RR teacher has abundant resources. A large school with more than one RR teacher for every two first grade classrooms may be considered to have abundant resources, unless more than 20% of the students qualify for RR.

''Although more than 94 children were served by in-training teachers in 1995-96, this number represents children whose RR teachers attributed their not discontinuing to the fact that the teacher was in training.

Time in the Program

Because each second round child cannot start the program until a first round child has been discontinued (or referred), discontinuing first round children sooner gives second round children more time to also discontinue. Figure 5 shows the months in which children discontinued

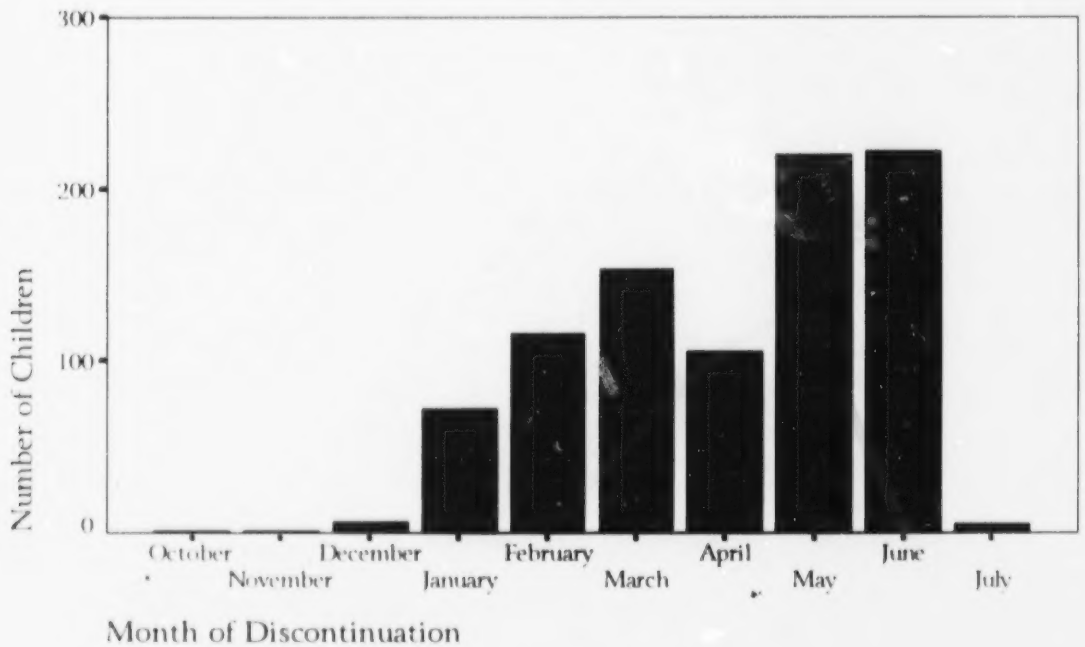

Figure 5. Number of children discontinuing each month

As shown in Figure 5, many children discontinued in May and June, with fewer discontinuing in January, February, and March. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of children in Maine who discontinued from RR in 1995-96 did so before the first of April. Note that a small number of children discontinued in July. In some schools, children still in the program at the end of the year were carried over into the summer or the fall of their second grade year. In 1995-96, 6 children were carried over into the summer and discontinued. Another 5 discontinued during the first semester of their second grade year (fall 1996). (These 5 children are not shown in Figure 5.)

The average number of lessons received before discontinuation was 66.6 (standard deviation, s = 29.6). The average number of weeks in the program before discontinuation was 19.7 (s =8.0). However, the average number of weeks of lessons[2] RR children received before discontinuation

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[2]The first two weeks of the program, called "roaming around in the known," during which the RR teacher helps the child establish fluent and flexible responses with what is known, are not counted in this figure.

was 17.6 (standard deviation = 8.1). This translates into is an average of 3.8 lessons per week. It is not always possible to conduct five lessons per week in an elementary school with vacation days, field trips, assemblies, and special programs. However, the goal of accelerative learning depends on consistent lessons, five times a week.

The average number of lessons per week that schools are able to provide RR children, combined with other factors, may affect schools' discontinuation rates, although the effect is very small at r = .11. Table 6 presents summary data to demonstrate the relationship. The discontinuation rates shown in Table 6, as in Table 4, represent the percentages of all RR children (even those who received only one lesson) who discontinued. Lessons per week were rounded to the nearest whole number for this table. Note that most schools in Maine provide about four lessons per week ("four" includes everything between 3.50 and 4.49). There is a pattern suggesting that schools providing more lessons per week can have higher rates of discontinuation. Again, the discontinuation rates shown in Table 6 do not account for waiting list children not taken into RR.

Table 6.
Schools' Average Lessons Per Week and Percent RR Children Discontinued

Average Lessons Per Week	Number and Percent of Schools with Given Discontinuation Rates				
	0% - 25% discontinued	26% - 50% discontinued	51% - 75% discontinued	75% - 100% discontinued	total
Two	1 (50%)		1 (50%)		2 (1.1%)
Three	11 (20.8%)	17 (32.1%)	16 (30.2%)	9 (17.0%)	53 (28.6%)
Four	15 (13.5%)	37 (33.3%)	43 (38.7%)	16 (14.4%)	111 (60.0%)
Five	2 (10.5%)	4 (21.1%)	8 (42.1%)	5 (26.3%)	19 (10.3%)
Total	29 (15.7%)	58 (31.4%)	68 (36.8%)	30 (16.2%)	185 (100%)

Criterion-Referenced Measures of Achievement

Table 7 gives average scores on the Observation Survey, in both the fall and the spring, for RR children, random sample children, and waiting list children. The average scores (means) are listed first, and the standard deviations are listed second (in parenthases). Note that the average fall scores of RR children are low on all six measures. By spring, however, the average scores of discontinued children have increased dramatically. Text Level 1, for example, is characterized by

Table 7.
Fall and Spring Scores of Children, Means and Standard Deviations

		First Graders in Maine				
		Random Sample	Waiting List	Discontinued from RR	Referred	Still in RR at year end
Text Reading	Fall	4.0 (5.8)	1.0 (1.1)	0.7 (1.0)	0.4 (0.7)	0.6 (0.9)
	Spring	20.7 (7.7)	13.0 (7.2)	18.6 (3.8)	5.4 (4.1)	9.4 (3.5)
Writing Vocabulary	Fall	14.7 (10.3)	6.4 (4.3)	4.9 (3.8)	2.6 (2.3)	4.5 (3.8)
	Spring	48.6 (15.7)	39.3 (14.1)	47.3 (10.8)	27.2 (12.7)	37.9 (10.5)
HRS	Fall	21.4 (9.3)	10.9 (7.2)	7.8 (6.5)	3.4 (4.3)	6.7 (6.2)
	Spring	35.1 (3.3)	32.9 (4.9)	35.5 (1.9)	27.1 (7.9)	32.8 (4.1)
Word Test	Fall	4.9 (5.8)	0.7 (1.5)	0.5 (1.5)	0.2 (0.6)	0.4 (0.9)
	Spring	18.2 (3.0)	15.7 (4.6)	18.2 (1.7)	8.9 (5.6)	14.0 (4.2)
Concepts About Print	Fall	14.8 (3.4)	11.5 (3.3)	10.4 (3.5)	7.9 (3.1)	10.3 (3.4)
	Spring	20.5 (2.3)	19.0 (2.6)	20.8 (1.9)	16.9 (3.0)	19.0 (2.4)
Letter Identification	Fall	49.5 (6.5)	43.0 (9.0)	37.9 (11.0)	25.7 (13.4)	34.9 (12.5)
	Spring	53.3 (1.4)	52.7 (3.2)	53.2 (2.3)	49.9 (5.5)	52.5 (2.9)

simple, repetitive phrasing. Text Level 18 includes more complex phrasing and sentence structures, with fewer pictorial clues.

In order to catch up to their peers, RR children need to make accelerated progress in all areas of literacy skill. Table 8 depicts this progress in the form of gain scores. A gain score is simply a child's spring score minus his or her fall score. Again, means are listed first, and standard deviations are listed second (in parenthases). All children learn over the course of a year. A gain score is a way of measuring how much a child has progressed. Note that in order to reach the same levels of literacy skills, RR children must make larger gains than their peers. It should be kept in mind, however, that ceiling effects occur in all these measures. In other words, children with high fall scores are constrained somewhat in terms of the gains they can make, since the measures may not reach the high ends of some children's literacy skills.

Table 8
Average Gain Scores on the Observation Survey
(And Corresponding Standard Deviations)

Observation Survey Test	First Graders in Maine				
	Random Sample	Waiting List	Discontinued from RR	Referred	Still in RR at year end
Text Reading Gain	16.5 (7.2)	12.3 (7.0)	18.0 (4.0)	5.0 (4.1)	8.8 (3.4)
Writing Vocabulary Gain	33.5 (15.2)	33.1 (13.3)	42.2 (10.9)	24.7 (11.8)	33.4 (9.9)
HRS Gain	13.3 (8.4)	22.0 (7.6)	27.7 (6.7)	23.6 (7.8)	26.1 (6.6)
Word Test Gain	13.1 (5.6)	15.0 (4.5)	17.7 (2.2)	9.0 (5.4)	13.7 (4.1)
Concepts About Print Gain	5.6 (3.1)	7.5 (3.5)	10.4 (3.7)	8.9 (3.7)	8.6 (3.5)
Letter ID Gain	3.6 (5.7)	9.7 (8.8)	15.3 (11.0)	24.2 (12.2)	17.4 (12.3)

Figures 6 - 11 illustrate the gains made by children over the course of the year on the six assessments of the Observation Survey. Means for the tests in both the fall and the spring are shown. The concepts about print and letter identification tests, for example, show that random sample children, *on average*, entered first grade already understanding a lot about print and knowing most letters, so at-risk children had more to learn in order to catch up. Although all groups of children made progress, different rates of progress were attained, and these are illustrated. Note that the data represented in Figures 6 - 11 are the mean scores, so they represent the averages of each group. Within groups, there is considerable variation from these means.

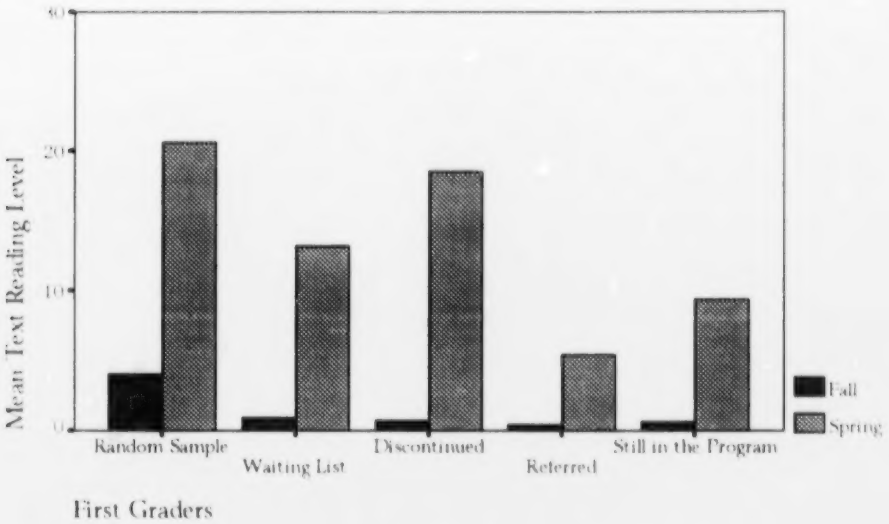

Figure 6. Progress of children on text reading over the year

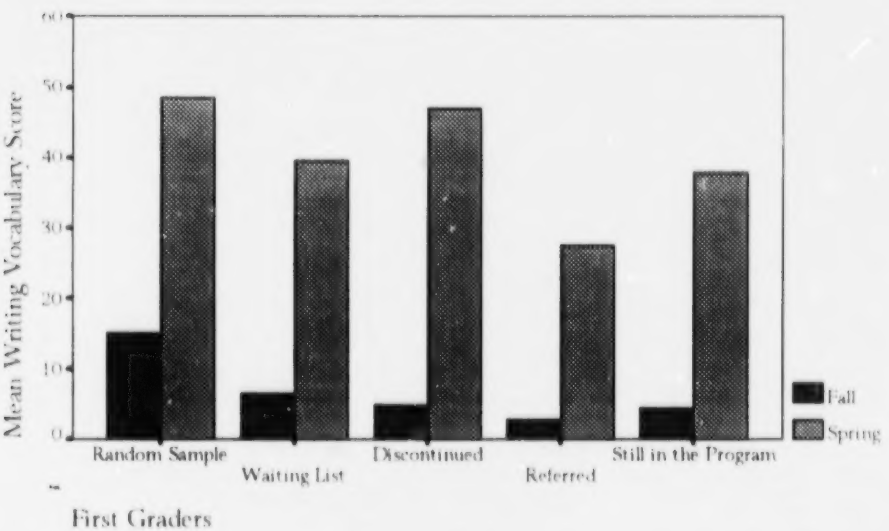

Figure 7. Progress of children on writing vocabulary over the year

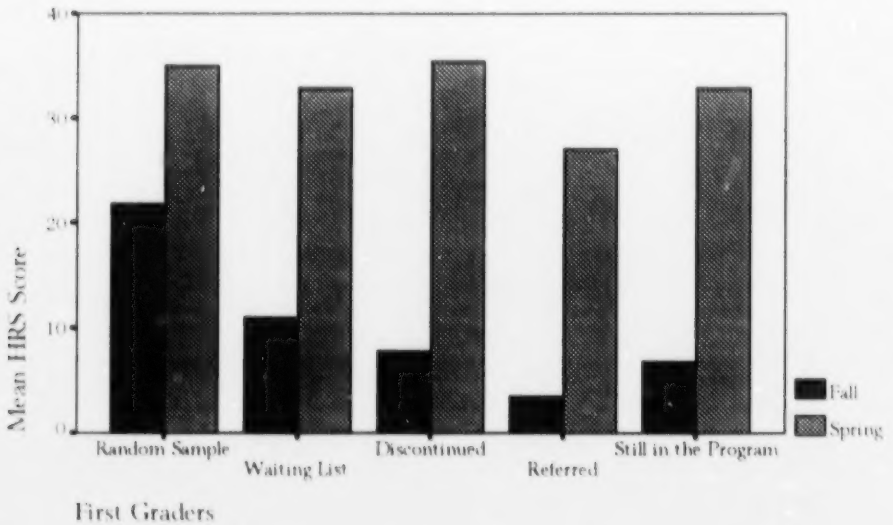

Figure 8 Progress of children on hearing and recording sounds over the year

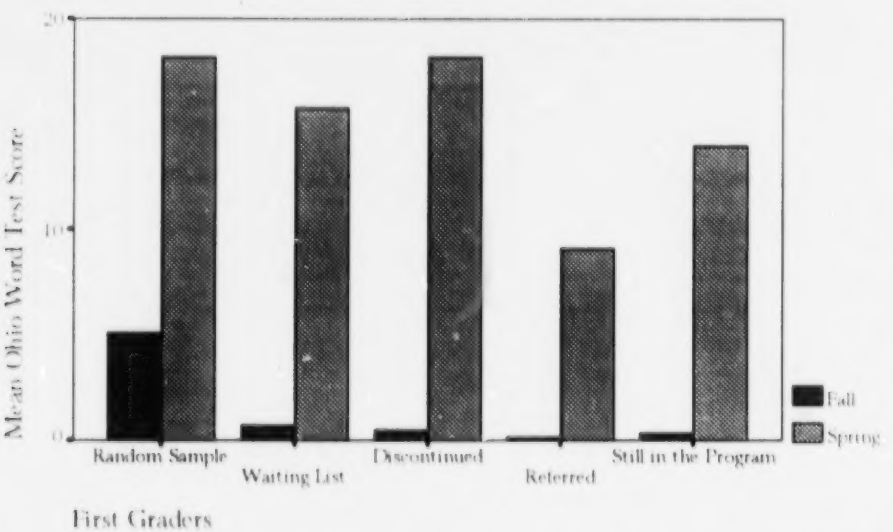

Figure 9 Progress of children on the Ohio word test over the year

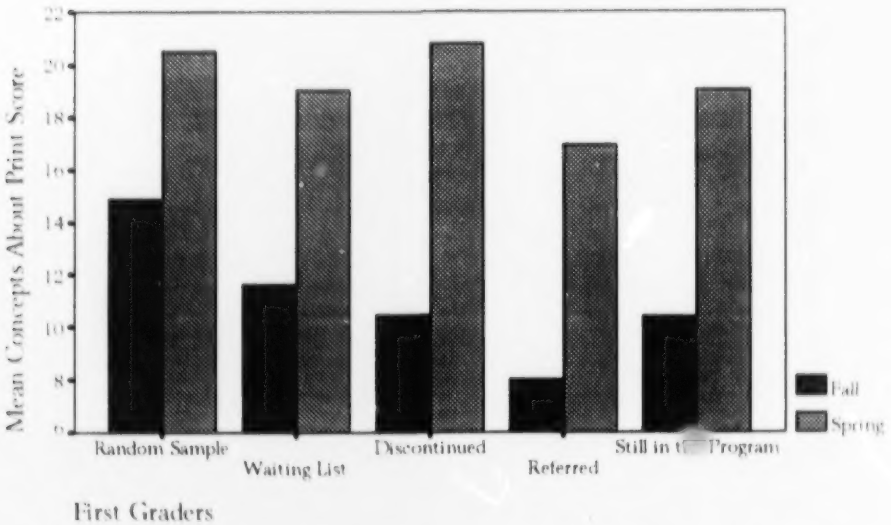

Figure 10 Progress of children on concepts about print over the year

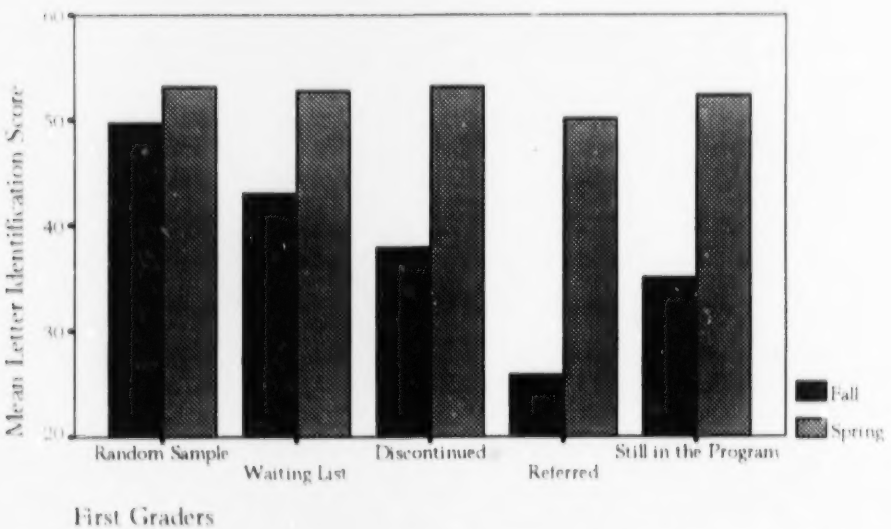

Figure 11. Progress of children on letter identification over the year.

In order for RR to be effective, learning must continue after children are released from the program. Figure 12 illustrates this continued progress. Children who were discontinued prior to April 20th continued to gain text reading levels for the remainder of the year

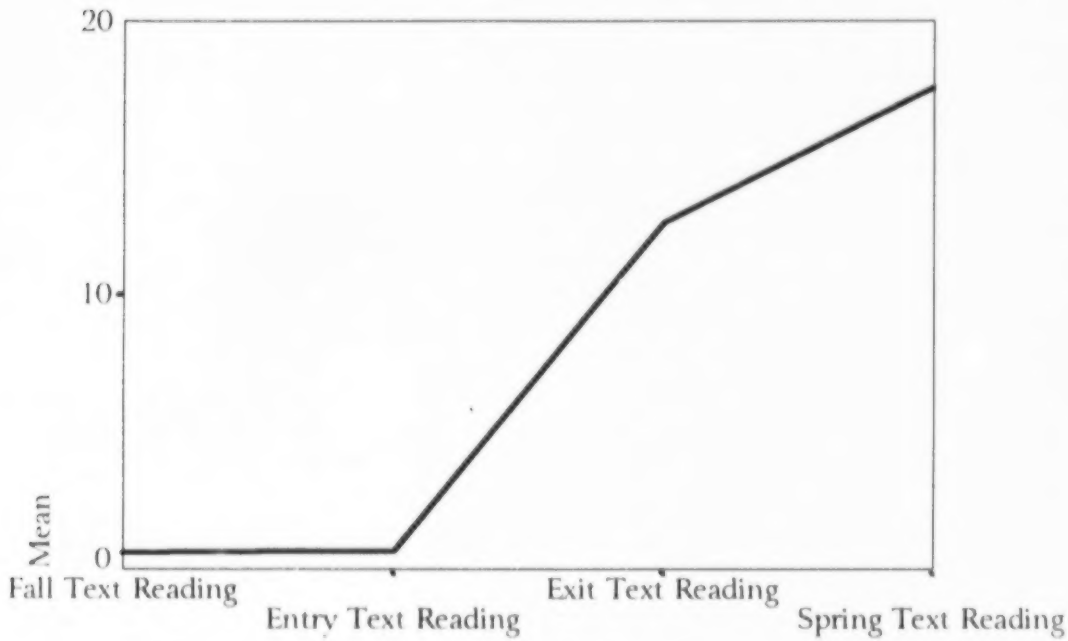

Figure 12. Text reading progress of children discontinued by April 20.

Norm Referenced Measures of Achievement

Because RR aims to bring previously low-achieving children up to the skill levels of their classmates, norm-referenced assessment is an important component of evaluation. The target point for RR children's literacy skills is the average level of performance of their non-RR peers.

Specifically, an "average band" is computed as a target for the performance of RR children by adding and subtracting ½ of a standard deviation unit from the random sample students' mean score. The components that go into the computation of the average bands for four tests of the Observation Survey are shown in Table 9. For example, the average score on text reading for the random sample students was 20.68, with a standard deviation of 7.71. When 7.71 is subtracted from 20.68, the lower bound for the average band, or 16.83, is the result. When 7.71 is added to 20.68, 24.54 is the result, and this is then the upper bound for that average band. Any child whose spring text reading level score is 18, 20, 22, or 24 (the only possible scores between 16.83 and 24.54), is said to have scored within the average band.

Table 9
Statewide Average Bands of Spring Scores

Variable Name	Mean	Standard Deviation	Average Band		
Text Reading	20.68	7.71	16.83	-	24.54
Writing Vocabulary	48.55	15.71	40.69	-	56.41
HRS	35.12	3.27	33.49	-	36.75
Ohio Word Test	18.23	3.03	16.72	-	19.75
Concepts About Print	20.53	2.35	19.36	-	21.71
Letter ID	53.32	1.43	52.61	-	54.04

Table 10 shows the percentages of children who scored above, within, or below the statewide average bands. Notice the large percentages of discontinued children whose skills are within the average band. This is the target range for their skills. Even though many discontinued several months before these spring scores were taken, nearly all were within these average bands at spring testing. Notice also the variation within the random sample children's scores. Although more of these children scored above the average band on text reading and writing vocabulary, more also scored below it.

Table 10.
Percentages of Children Below, Within, and Above Statewide Average Bands.
1995-96

	First Grade Children			
	Random Sample	Waiting List	Discontinued	Not Discontinued
Text Reading				
Below	18%	51%	3%	86%
Within	62%	47%	95%	14%
Above	20%	2%	2%	0%
Writing Vocabulary				
Below	14%	30%	7%	86%
Within	72%	65%	86%	14%
Above	14%	4%	6%	0%
HRS				
Below	8%	23%	2%	33%
Within	92%	77%	98%	67%
Above	0%	0%	0%	0%
Ohio Word Test				
Below	11%	36%	7%	61%
Within	89%	64%	93%	39%
Above	0%	0%	0%	0%
Concepts About Print				
Below	19%	40%	11%	47%
Within	58%	51%	67%	48%
Above	23%	9%	22%	5%
Letter Identification				
Below	5%	14%	5%	25%
Within	95%	86%	95%	75%
Above	0%	0%	0%	0%

Classroom Teachers' Professional Development

An effort has been made recently in Maine to help smooth transitions from RR back to the classroom. One initiative involves offering a series of workshops on early literacy to K-2 classroom teachers and special educators. In a similar initiative, a trained RR teacher teaches K-2 classroom teachers how to administer the Observation Survey. In an effort to determine whether such professional development would impact children's success in the RR program, whether or not a child's classroom teacher had received either of these forms of training was recorded. Figure 13 shows the percentages of children whose teachers received the above-described training.

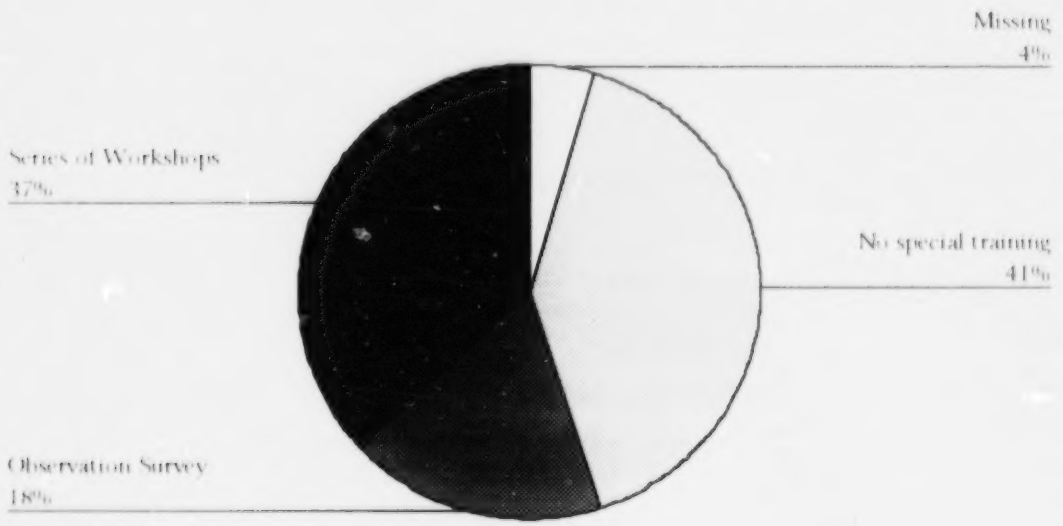

Figure 13 Percentages of RR children whose classroom teachers received early literacy training

Table 11 shows the relation between classroom teachers' professional development in early literacy and RR children's discontinuation. There appears to be a weak but positive relationship. Children whose classroom teachers have had some kind of training in early literacy are slightly more likely to discontinue (56% and 57%) than those whose teachers have not (51%).

Table 11.
Discontinuation Rates of Children Whose Classroom Teachers Had Professional Development in Early Literacy

	Discontinued	Still in the Program	Referred
No special training	51%	35%	14%
Observation Survey training	56%	33%	11%
Workshop series	57%	33%	9%

Attitudes About the Program

As part of program evaluation for the RR program in Maine, parents, classroom teachers, administrators, and RR teachers responded to open-ended survey questions, and they rated the program along dimensions of quality. Surveys were returned to RR Teacher Leaders, who summarized the responses in their respective sites and then sent the summaries and representative responses on to the Center for Early Literacy at the University of Maine. The complete qualitative surveys summary, which is available from the Center for Early Literacy, is summarized here.

The survey forms are standard for RR sites in the United States, and many of the questions were updated in the spring of 1996. Because the revisions were received from RR headquarters after some Teacher Leaders had already distributed the forms, not all respondents received the updated survey forms. Three RR sites in Maine responded to the old survey questions, and the remaining seven sites responded to the new survey questions. On all but the parent survey forms, the wording of the quantitative rating questions was changed in the new version. Answers to both versions of the survey are summarized.

Response rates were very high, ranging from 76% to 100%. Overall, all groups of respondents rated the program very favorably, with the majority of comments also reflecting approval and support for the program. The most frequent concerns raised were funding and how more children could benefit from RR.

Parents

One thousand, eighty-seven (1087) surveys were returned from 1429 parents, for a response rate of 76%. All parents were asked to choose the response between 1, "not a very good program" and 5, "a very good program," that best represented their opinion of RR. A whopping 93% of them, or 841 out of the 928 who answered this question, used the most positive option, "a very good program." Almost all of the others chose the next highest response. The mean response was 4.9.

Parents' reactions to the program were almost singular in their support. Many expressed appreciation for the changes in their children's skills.

> I am very impressed and pleased beyond words at the difference the RR program made in [child's] life.
>
> Without this program I would be at a loss as to how to help my son. Thank you for offering such a wonderful program to him.
>
> My other daughter is in 7th grade and has a learning disability. I think this program would have made a great deal of difference if she [had had] it in her earlier school years.

One family, in the words of the Teacher Leader, "was so impressed with the program that they established a special fund at the school department to be used in any way that would help the program."

Some parents noted the accomplishments of their children after the RR program.

> My son certainly has learned new ways of figuring out the words that he doesn't know and is more willing to try to do things on his own.

> My son is better able to problem solve.

> I couldn't believe how fast he learned to read.

Other parents noted improvements in their children's attitudes about school and their self-esteem after the RR program.

> She enjoys school more and feels that she can help the teacher with the younger children.

> My son has become more confident in participating in class. His self-esteem has definitely been boosted.

Some parents noted the importance of parental involvement in children's reading. This was an idea also reflected by the responses of RR teachers, which are summarized later in this report.

> It is extremely important that the parents have an active part in this program. When they bring their books home every night, have them read to you. It really is wonderful to see how everything comes together.

Classroom Teachers

Five hundred thirty-five (535) surveys were distributed to classroom teachers working in schools with RR. Of those, 493, or 92%, were returned. Some classroom teachers responded to the question, "What impact has RR had on RR students' classroom performance?" Possible answers ranged from 1, "very little impact," to 5, "very large impact." The average response was 4.7, and 94% of classroom teachers responded either 4 or 5, with 78% of them, 287 out of 366, choosing the highest rating, "very large impact."

One hundred twenty-four (124) classroom teachers responded to the question, "How much has the RR teacher let you know about the progress of this/these student(s)?" Eighty-two percent (82%) of the teachers who responded to this question chose either 4 or 5, with the mean response 4.6. These teachers were also asked to respond to the statement, "Circle the number below which best describes your view of RR." Possible responses were between 1, "not a very good

program," to 5, "a very good program." The mean response was 4.7, with 77% of teachers choosing 5, and another 14% choosing 4.

Many classroom teachers' comments reflected positively on children from their classrooms who had progressed.

> RR has made teaching reading much smoother in my class. Children who need extra help receive it and many of them are able to move quickly enough to become independent readers and writers.

> This program has enormous value for our first graders - many of our children come from homes where reading is not a priority.

Other comments from classroom teachers indicated that RR may have affected students' attitudes and self-esteem.

> New confidence and self-esteem helped in all classroom areas--not just in reading.

> Increased self esteem about learning to read; attitude shift from "I can't" to "I can;" increased independence in the classroom.

Many schools adopt RR in conjunction with a school-wide focus on early literacy. Some classroom teachers remarked that the implementation of RR had impacted the way literacy is taught throughout the school. Some of these comments refer to programs designed to familiarize classroom teachers and special educators with the theories of literacy acquisition on which RR is based.

> I feel that we've done a complete turn-around in our methods of teaching reading and I feel that these new techniques truly give us a more specific idea of strengths, weaknesses, and progress.

Some classroom teachers indicated that they appreciated the assessment information that RR provided.

> The Observation Survey information helped me to use tools so that I can "diagnose" my students' approach to print. These valuable tools help me to feel more solid in my approach to a remedy (such as offering new strategies, changing habits and giving new direction).

Many classroom teachers expressed the wish that more children could benefit from RR, or that children could be served beyond the first grade.

> I feel that the RR program is one of the best investments which our school districts use money to support. I wish that it could service more children, but I am grateful that it is available to those who are the most needy.

> I support RR all the way!! We're so lucky to have it and I wish we had another teacher.

A small number expressed concerns regarding the administration and/or philosophy of the program.

> It's hard when a lot of children leave the class at different times all throughout the day, but I know they benefit.

> If there is a waiting list I would like to be sure second round children have an equal opportunity for completion. I would like to see the year divided equally.

Administrators

Out of 250 questionnaires distributed, 198 were returned for a return rate of 79%. When asked "What impact has implementing the RR program had in your school over the last 5 or 10 years," 71 administrators, or 54% of those who responded, indicated that it had had a "very large impact." The mean response was 4.4, on a scale that ranged from 1, "very little impact" to 5, "very large impact."

Most (48 out of 58, or 83%) administrators responding to the question that asked them to "circle the number which best describes your view of RR," circled 5, the highest response, for "a very good program." The mean response was 4.8, on a scale from 1 "not a very good program" to 5 "a very good program."

Comments from administrators indicated strong support for the program. Many indicated that the students in RR had become independent readers and writers.

> Immense growth that has extended now into 4th grade!

> [RR] has made a significant impact. Those students who have been discontinued are at or above their grade level. It has also reduced the number of referrals to special education.

Other administrators noticed changes in children's self-esteems after taking part in RR.

> The children with whom [RR Teacher] has worked have made significant gains in self-confidence and in other subjects, not to mention impressive gains in reading.

> Reading Recovery has impacted the target children directly in a very positive way! They love it, and self-esteem rises as children meet success.

Some administrators reported that they had measured fewer retentions and/or referrals to special education as a result of the program.

> Fewer students referred to special education, fewer retentions in first grade than previous years. More interest in RR strategies by classroom teachers.

> In the second year of the program it has been interesting to track the performance of the students. Most are doing well. The numbers of Title I and Special Education referrals has decreased as well.

Some comments reflected that the implementation of RR, along with other measures to target early literacy, had impacted the school.

> This program has had a positive impact on the whole school.

> The Reading Recovery program and the course which staff members have taken have fundamentally changed beliefs about reading instruction.

> RR has not only significantly helped the children and parents directly involved in the instructional program, it has also served as a powerful professional development model for the whole school.

Many expressed financial concerns regarding the program.

> As always, financial considerations are a main concern, but we hope to train two more teachers in the classroom aspects of using Reading Recovery methods.

> Classroom teachers need to receive training so they can help make "carry over" succeed.

> Funding. How to assess earlier in the fall and thus begin the program earlier, and educating all staff and parents of the wisdom and cost-effectiveness of the early intervention RR offers.

Some administrators expressed concern about resource allocation and the selection of children for the program.

> Strongest support comes from first-grade teachers, followed by those taking EDU 580, who recognize the value of common language and comprehensive assessment. At all levels, teachers appreciate RR theory, but the importance and cost of individual instruction is being challenged.

> How can we be sure that we target the right children at the right time?

Trained Teachers

One hundred seventy-one (171) surveys were returned from 182 trained RR teachers for a return rate of 94%. Trained teachers responding to the statement, "I have become a more effective RR teacher this year," gave an average response of 4.5 on a scale that ranged from 1, "strongly disagree," to 5, "strongly agree." Ninety-three percent (93%) of the responses were either 4 or 5, with more than half responding "strongly agree."

Trained RR teachers who responded to the question, "As a RR teacher, how much have you learned this year," gave a mean response of 4.1 on a scale ranging from 1, "nothing," to 5, "a great deal." Over half of all these trained RR teachers responded with the number 4. These teachers also responded to the question, "Circle the number which best describes your view of RR." Possible responses ranged from 1, "not a very good program," to 5, "a very good program." The average response was 4.9, and fully 88% percent of respondents (36 out of 41) used 5, the most positive category, indicating strong allegiances to and positive views of the RR program from trained teachers.

Comments from trained RR teachers included statements affirming their support of the RR program.

> I enjoyed discontinuing two students and finding out that both had made gains at year's end.
>
> A child who would have been labeled learning disabled, now reads in the average of his class.
>
> [One of the highlights of my RR teaching experience this year has been] doing test follow-up on my discontinued child from last year and finding that he is right where he should be!

Others commented on their growth as teachers and the importance of continuing to improve.

> I have become a better observer as I have gained experience and am better able to make decisions with more knowledge.
>
> I would like to be kept up to date on the newest findings in the field, particularly with strong teaching models - perhaps videos of strong teaching. I would like some insights on how to help children who do everything slowly.

One of the themes from the parents' responses was repeated by trained RR teachers: the importance of parent involvement with their children's literacy learning.

> Cooperation between home and school really makes a difference.

Many trained RR teachers commented on their need for colleague interaction. Those who had it spoke praises of how professional dialogue helped them be more effective, while those who lacked it longed for it.

> Having a colleague in the same building has made me think more closely about problems, solutions, and ideas in general.

> As the years pass from our training year, there is far less contact and support. Teaching "at risk" students is very challenging but also difficult. There is little to no positive feedback and limited opportunity to process and discuss application and interpretations of theory. RR leaders need to take a close look at how to best support their teachers to ensure that the program continues to be successful.

> I miss the weekly contacts. I am the only RR teacher and quite removed from the rest. I need more colleague contact.

The life of many RR teachers is busy, and some comments reflected that there is not enough time to do all they would like to do.

> [My concerns are] getting all the work done for both jobs [and] not having the time to bring peers in to help with a difficult child.

> [My concern is] why can't I get the students out faster?

> (District) has not money to put into training others. I am rushing from K building to (other school) for RR. It is rare I feel I have time to go to the bathroom.

A small number of comments reflected differences between the RR teacher's expectations and the reality of at-risk children, whose performance is unpredictable, in both positive and negative directions.

> It has been difficult working with the same hard to accelerate children. I always start out with high expectations and am then disappointed when I cannot get them to discontinue.

> My lowest entering child, who also was very young, discontinued! That proves that I cannot predict who will be successful or not, because I had real concerns for some time over his progress and then suddenly he took off!

Some RR teachers noted the importance of meshing RR children's classroom instruction with what they learn in RR.

> The biggest problem continues to be the often mismatch of what the child does during the lesson and what is going on in the classroom. We need to have more teachers take the supportive classroom course.

One comment reflected the time-consuming nature of accurate data collection.

> RR really does make a difference for the child. Unfortunately, the data collection and record keeping - combined with the many obligations of also being a classroom teacher is overwhelming at times. Is it possible now that RR is a "proven" program to have less data collection?

In-Training RR Teachers

All 68 RR teachers in training returned their questionnaires, giving this group a 100% response rate. Those who responded to the statement, "My view of teaching low progress children how to read has changed considerably this year," indicated strong agreement, with a mean response of 4.8, on a scale from 1, "strongly disagree," to 5, "strongly agree." Forty-five (45) out of 52 RR teachers in training selected 5, the highest category.

Sixteen (16) RR teachers in training responded to the question, "As a RR teacher, how much have your learned this year?" All sixteen selected either 4 or 5, on a scale from 1, "nothing," to 5, "a great deal." The mean response was 4.9, and 88% of respondents selected 5, the highest category.

Comments from RR teachers in training indicated extreme enthusiasm for the program.

> [The highlights have been] seeing a disengaged boy go from defiance and lack of interest to a love of reading as his knowledge grew!

> I now feel that I have had a major part in developing some life long learners. I am much more conscious of the gains that children can make when provided with the proper tools.

Some comments reflected again the cooperation necessary between parents, classroom teachers, and RR teachers in order to make the program work.

> I never realized all that was involved in teaching reading. This class has taught me so much. I have passed some of this on to my teachers and it has helped all of us.

> Learning to read is a team effort involving the parents, classroom teachers, RR [teachers] and other support staff.

Conclusions

This report has related information about the implementation and outcomes of Reading Recovery in Maine for the 1995-96 school year. One of the most positive findings is that nearly all children who successfully discontinue from the program display reading and writing skills at or above the state's average bands by the end of first grade. This is especially important since all children in the RR program were identified as being at risk for literacy failure. It appears that for children who are discontinued, the program's results are very positive. More than half of all children served are successfully discontinued from the program.

Because the program appears to be so successful with children who are discontinued, one important question is, what prevents some children from discontinuing? Although the situation is different for every child, a number of reasons were presented. Nineteen percent (19%) of children were in the program at the end of the year with less than a "full program" (60 lessons). Many of these children might discontinue if their programs could be extended into the summer or the following fall. In a small number of schools this year, some children were carried over, and many of them discontinued. At the state level, however, this is not an option available to many schools. Between 12% and 13% of children served by RR were referred for long-term special help in another program. Many of these children will be served through special education. Since schools do not screen for special education before placing children in the RR program (such screening would be highly unreliable), this finding should not be too surprising. In a school that serves its lowest 20% of children through RR, 13% referred is equivalent to 2.6% of the first grade class. Other reasons children do not discontinue are diverse.

Implementation of the program statewide was also examined. In order to serve all the children in Maine who are at risk of literacy failure, the program should approximately double in size. This means that schools that have not yet adopted the program will need RR teachers and program support, and under-implemented schools (schools with fewer than one RR teacher(s) for every 40 first grade children) will need additional teachers.

It is suggested that a network of trained RR teachers in Maine be established. While RR teachers in training and RR teachers in contact with their colleagues praise this professional contact as vital to their success with at-risk children, those who are without frequent colleague contact lament this fact. Notably, one Teacher Leader has been encouraging "colleague cluster visits" in addition to regular Teacher Leader site visits. A small number of RR teachers attend each other's lessons periodically, offering professional critique after the lesson has been completed.

The program evaluation question which begs to be asked is, how long do discontinued RR children stay at the average reading level of their classes? Planning is underway for a statewide longitudinal study that will address this question in the near future.

Recommendations for Improving Reading Recovery Implementation in Maine

by
Paula Moore, State Program Coordinator

You don't fatten-up sheep by weighing them.
- Marie Clay

Marie Clay, the founder of the Reading Recovery program, used the classic New Zealand sheep-farming metaphor above to put testing and evaluation in perspective. Just as a sheep farmer can't fatten up his sheep by weighing them, we can't make students smarter by testing them. Likewise, we can't make schools or programs more effective just by evaluating them. While the bottom-line for teachers, schools, and training sites is how effective they have been at ensuring the progress of all children in the Reading Recovery program, "fattening-up" is achieved only by making a change at some level of the teaching or training program.

> *There are two positive outcomes from the Reading Recovery program. One is that children catch up with peers and continue to make progress (discontinued.) The second is that children who will need long-term specialist help in reading and writing are identified early and reliably (referred).*
> - Barbara Watson, Director of the NZ National Reading Recovery Program and International Consultant for the Program

In Reading Recovery, Observation Survey data is used to guide changes at many levels in the program. School teams use Observation Survey data on individual children to weigh up the success of the team and make changes in the team's efforts. For example, if a student is making slower progress than anticipated, a team might decide that more collaboration is needed between the classroom and Reading Recovery teacher, or that the student needs extra time reading familiar books with an older student or adult volunteer.

- *One of the areas in which we have made progress as a state is in reducing the number of Reading Recovery children who are referred for long-term reading and writing help (e.g., special education or Title I.)*
- *In schools which are fully implemented, it is recommended that Reading Recovery teachers continue the program in second grade for children who end the first grade year with incomplete programs. This change would ensure that all Reading Recovery children receive fair access to a full program, with the potential to discontinue.*

Teacher Leaders use Observation Survey data from their regional sites to make changes in the training or continuing contact services they deliver. I use the Observation Survey data to make recommendations to schools and training sites about aspects of State program implementation that are effective and those that need changes for the next year. This year, I will use the data to

highlight one program area in which we have made progress, and one area in which I recommend a change in operations.

Children Referred for Long-Term Help

One of the areas that Maine Teacher Leaders, Reading Recovery teachers, and school teams have worked very hard to improve is reducing the number of Reading Recovery children who are referred for long-term reading and writing help (e.g., special education or Title I). When a child is making very slow progress in Reading Recovery, many school teams now examine the student's total school program to ensure the school is organized to ensure success. Teacher Leaders and I have explored theoretical and practical issues around teaching children with very low repertoires of knowledge in our professional development sessions. Reading Recovery teachers have worked harder at understanding the children they find difficult to teach in continuing contact sessions and school visits.

During school year 1995-96, a little less than thirteen percent of the Reading Recovery children had to be referred for long-term help in reading or writing. This is a modest improvement over previous referral rates. However, it is noteworthy, because more schools report that they are using Reading Recovery as a pre-referral strategy for special education services. In addition, more schools are giving more children access to the program who previously had been referred in Kindergarten. Furthermore, about six percent of the children who were referred during 1995-96 received at least sixty lessons, evidence that schools are giving children access to a full Reading Recovery program before referring them. This is an efficient use of the program, supported by years of research on the program.

Children Who are Still in the Program at the End of the Year

While we are doing a better job, state wide, at reducing the numbers of Reading Recovery children who are referred on to long-term services, we still have a significant number of children who end the first grade year in limbo--they are not discontinued or referred. Thirty-three percent of the Reading Recovery children in the 1995-96 school year did not achieve either of the positive outcomes promised by Reading Recovery. Of greatest concern is that the largest portion of these children (19%) had fewer than sixty lessons, the criteria for a complete program. It is likely that most of these children were selected for the program in March or April, and the school year ended before they could finish lessons. Since they did not discontinue on end-of-year testing, they did not meet the criteria of "average of the class." This means it is likely that they will continue to need extra services in the Title I program in second grade, and consequently, some schools did not achieve their goal of reducing the need for Title I services in higher grades.

The percentage of children who end their Reading Recovery program in limbo has remained steady since we began the program in Maine. In the early years, when the program was just starting, many schools did not have adequate numbers of Reading Recovery teachers to meet the needs. Therefore, it made sense to serve only first graders each year. However, in 1995-96, sixty-three percent of the schools in Maine with Reading Recovery were fully implemented (one Reading Recovery teacher for at least forty first graders.) Furthermore, forty percent of the Reading Recovery schools had a better than one-to-forty ratio of teacher to first graders. In these schools, it should be possible to continue Reading Recovery children into second grade without

jeopardizing the first grade program. This simple change would help schools ensure that more children have an opportunity to succeed early in their school life.

Of course, there will be implications for the school program when a school carries Reading Recovery children into second grade. For example, carried over children may take a *little* longer to discontinue than the typical twelve to twenty weeks, because they have had a long summer break. In addition, second graders will need to discontinue at a much higher level to achieve the average of the class. School teams are encouraged to discuss this recommendation and the implications in consultation with Teacher Leaders. The payoffs could be great in terms of improving a school's over-all literacy learning results and in ensuring individual children's success in school.